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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of:

CHASE A. HAFNER, ET AL.

Serial No.: 09/421,038

Filed: October 20, 1999

For: METHOD FOR MANAGING INFORMATION AND RENDERING DISCOUNTS

Attorney Docket No.: 1668 (USW 0535 PUS)

Group Art Unit: 3622

Examiner: Donald Champagne

REPLY BRIEF

Mail Stop Appeal Brief - Patents
Commissioner for Patents
U.S. Patent & Trademark Office
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

This is a reply brief in response to the Examiner's answer mailed on October 31, 2005.

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.8

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ARGUMENT

The Examiner's answer includes a verbatim copy of the final rejection mailed on March 3, 2005, except that three lines have now been made bold in paragraph 5 and two typographical errors have been corrected.

Claims 1-19 are believed to be patentable for the reasons given in the appeal brief.

In paragraph 5, the Examiner now further emphasizes Figure 2 of U.S. Patent No. 5,003,584 (Benyacar). The Examiner states that Figure 2 reads on establishing both a rule-based accumulation engine and a rule-based discount engine, including a non-application specific, configurable system as claimed. Appellants note that claim 1 recites a method for managing information and rendering discounts in a billing system wherein the method comprises several specific features in combination. According to claim 1, the customer record is processed with the accumulation engine to accumulate the data in a plurality of target accumulators. Further, the plurality of target accumulators is processed with the discount engine to render discounts applicable to the customer. Claim 1 further recites that the rule-based accumulation engine and the rule-based discount engine each include a non-application specific, configurable, system that processes input data to produce output data where processing is dictated by a set of configurable rules.

It must be appreciated that the method recited in claim 1 involves two separate processing actions (processing the record, then processing the target accumulators to render the discounts).

The only portion of Figure 2 in Benyacar that appears relevant to the rejection made by the Examiner is block 251 which illustrates the billing system generating a

customer/caller bill from the AMA billing record. The Examiner states that generating the bill includes rendering discounts applicable to the customer.

Generating the bill may include rendering discounts applicable to the customer, however, claim 1 recites a specific approach to managing information and rendering discounts that is not suggested by Benyacar. In order to maintain the rejection, the Examiner has made reference to dictionaries in an attempt to broadly read the claims on Benyacar. Appellants note that each claimed configurable system processes input data to produce output data where the processing is dictated by a set of configurable rules. Figure 2 of Benyacar only generally shows bill generation and fails to suggest the specifically claimed method wherein managing information and rendering discounts comprises, in summary, receiving a customer record including data, establishing a rule-based accumulation engine, processing the record with the accumulation engine, establishing a rule-based discount engine, and processing the plurality of target accumulators to render discounts applicable to the customer.

Regarding paragraph 6 of the Examiner's answer, the Examiner acknowledges that Benyacar does not explicitly teach accumulating the data in a plurality of predetermined target accumulators. The Examiner relies on principles inherency in maintaining this rejection. It must be appreciated that claim 1 involves two distinct engines, each having a set of configurable rules and being non-application specific and configurable. The accumulation engine accumulates the data in the plurality of target accumulators, and the target accumulators are processed with the discount engine, as recited by claim 1. In this way, the separation of the engines provides flexibility in that configuration of the accumulation engine determines the way the data is accumulated in the plurality of predetermined target accumulators and configuration of the discount engine determines the way that these target accumulators result in discounts. It is not inherent that Benyacar operate in the same way as recited by claim 1. The use of separate engines as recited by claim 1, each having configurable rules, is not the same as a general teaching of generating bills. Although Appellants disagree with the

Examiner's interpretation of the claim terms, even using the Examiner's own broad interpretation of the claims, the claimed feature relating to the target accumulators is not inherent in Benyacar. For example, Benyacar may utilize a single-stage algorithm (without target accumulators) to render discounts applicable to the customer directly from the customer record (block 251 implies this by stating that the billing system generates a customer/caller bill from the AMA billing record). This distinction between the claimed invention and Benyacar is critical. The claimed process separates data gathering from discount rendering. Benyacar seems to render discounts directly from the record and does not necessarily involve or even suggest the use of predetermined target accumulators to interface an accumulation action to a rendering action.

Regarding claim 10, the rule-based engine recited in claim 10 is configured to perform the separate actions of receiving a customer record including data, processing the record to accumulate the data in a plurality of predetermined target accumulators, and processing the plurality of target accumulators to render discounts applicable to the customer.

Claim 11 recites a computer readable storage medium comprising instructions for carrying out various actions to manage information and render discounts in a billing system.

Claims 1-19 are believed to be patentable for the reasons given above, and for the reasons set forth in the appeal brief.

Please charge any additional fee or credit any overpayment in connection with this filing to our Deposit Account No. 02-3978.

Respectfully submitted,

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